SONGS OF THE COAST DWELLERS

CONSTANCE LINDSAY SKINNER

COWARD McCANN

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SONGS OF THE COAST DWELLERS

By the Same Author

RED WILLOWS

THE SEARCH RELENTLESS

Songs of the Coast Dwellers

by

Constance Lindsay Skinner

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FOREWORD

A pageant is in progress in Vancouver, British Columbia, where the future confronts the past daily across the narrow and lovely stretch of water called Burrard Inlet. On the one shore is the white man's city, growing yearly in bulk and importance; on the other, the old village of the Squamish Indians, slowly dwindling out of vision into memory. The pageant in the streets and theatre of the white man's town essays to pick up lost threads of British Columbian history from the days before explorers, fur traders and sea otter hunters in sailing ships nosed out this beautiful harbor. That is why the Squamish, numbering less than three hundred now, are here in ceremonial regalia, led by their chief, Mathias. A dancer steps out and etches a wild pattern in broken rhythms upon a patch of vivid cobalt and olive dashed with wine; cutting upon the illusive substance of the sunset air, spilling over mountains and sea, the lines of the song that came to him one spring morning in the cedar woods behind his village.

"A very long time ago," says Mathias, "my people noticed how the birds, fluttering to the ground from their nests at dawn, began to dance before they looked for food. They saw, too, that the birds leaned their heads low, first on one side, then on the other, listening to the earth. And what they

heard, they danced. So it became the custom of our young men to go at dawn into the woods to listen to the earth. And the listener to whom a song is given returns to dance it for his tribe, so that all may share with him the song which the earth gave to him while he listened in the forest at dawn." Which serves to remind us that Rhythm is infinite—or, at least, barely explored—and that only snatches of it have yet been heard and adapted to our thought and speech. In effect, Mathias has stated the fact that Nature herself is the source of rhythm to primitive peoples—to those poets whose house of life and most intimate companion is the wilderness. Rhythm is visible and aural to the poet of the wilderness, whose senses are not beset by the din and confused motion of civilization. Articles of mine discussing the Squamish theory of the origin of rhythm and my own experiments in imitation of Nature rhythms appeared in the New York *Times*, 1916, in Reedy's *Mirror*, and in *The Path on the Rainbow* in 1918.

My *Songs of the Coast Dwellers* are not translations nor adaptations of Indian poems: nor were they suggested by Indian poems, for I had made no study of Indian poetry when I began to write them. The Indians of the wilderness which environed my youth had been Christianized. The customs, which I have used in a few poems for my own purposes—such as the burial of the scarlet mourning blanket, the lover's journey, the quenching of the torch, whip-plaiting —had been long out of practice. I doubt that the Indians gave those customs my interpretations of them.

The succession of lyrics presents, in primitive symbolism, the characters of an imaginary community and the interweaving of their lives. There are the lovers and the women they mate with, or fail to win, the young mothers, the lonely maidens who still wait for love, and the women forsaken: the dying hunter, the village dandy, the aged man, the chief and his braggart little son, the priest, the man who weds money, the bear-killer, the poet whose songs begin to seek the realm of imagination above the actualities of experience and whose name, Kan-il-lak, is that of the divine culturist of a coast tribe; and the Four Seasons and the Earth, which appear as persons of the group.

The inspiration of these songs is chiefly the coast of British Columbia—with its continuous panorama of lights and shadows; its falling and dissolving mists streaked with a wine-red glow where the timbered, white-capped mountains battle through them into the clear of the sun; its seas running blue and green and slate into a hundred narrow inlets, there to lie quiet in the form of crystal mirrors reflecting the emerald flanks and snowy peaks of the steep shores; and the long soft deep soughing of miles of great cedars dragging their lower branches over the rocks; the shriller cry of the pine-tops, and the humor of the little leaves that "clap their hands"—Nature Rhythms, immense, often harsh as well as mournful, splendid in their joyousness, broken, resurgent: sounds that the dissonants of civilization have not dimmed for me.

C. L. S.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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THE SINGER

I am the Elder Brother
I am the Making-Right (priest)
I am the Counsellor of Earth in the always
calm place.
Kwakiutl.

SONG OF THE SEARCH

I descend through the forest alone.
Rose-flushed are the willows, stark and a-quiver,
In the warm sudden grasp of Spring;
Like a woman when her lover has suddenly, swiftly taken her.
I hear the secret rustle of the little leaves,
Waiting to be born.
The air is a wind of love
From the wings of eagles mating—
O eagles, my sky is dark with your wings!
The hills and the waters pity me,
The pine-trees reproach me.
The little moss whispers under my feet,
"Son of Earth, brother,
Why comest thou hither alone?"

Oh, the wolf has his mate on the mountain—
Where art thou, Spring-daughter?
I tremble with love as the reeds by the river,
I burn as the dusk in the red-tented west,

I call thee aloud as the deer calls the doe,
I await thee as hills wait the morning,
I desire thee as eagles the storm;
I yearn to thy breast as night to the sea,
I claim thee as the silence claims the stars.
O Earth, Earth, great Earth,
Say where is she, the Bearer of Morning,
My Bringer of Song?
Love in me waits to be born,
Where is She, the Woman?

SONG OF WHIP-PLAITING

In the Dawn I gathered cedar-boughs
For the plaiting of thy whip;
They were wet with sweet drops;
They still thought of the night.

All alone I shredded cedar-boughs
(Green boughs in the pale light);
Where the morning meets the sea,
And the great mountain stops.

Earth was very still.

I heard no sound but the whisper of my knife,
My black, flint knife.
It whispered among the white strands of the cedar,
Whispered in parting the sweet cords for thy whip.
O sweet-smelling juice of cedar—
Life-ooze of love!
My knife drips:
Its whisper is the only sound in all the world!

Finer than young sea-lion's hairs
Are my cedar-strands:
They are fine as little roots deep down.
(O little roots of cedar
Far, far under the bosom of Earth!
They have plaited her through with love.)

Now, into my love-gift,
Closely, strongly, I will weave them—
Little strands of pain!
Since I saw thee
Standing with thy torch in my doorway,
Their little roots are deep in me.

In the Dawn I gathered cedar-boughs—
Sweet, sweet was their odor;
They were wet with tears!

The sweetness will not leave my hands,
No, not in salt sea-washings:
Tears will not wash away sweetness,
I shall have sweet hands for thy service.

(Ah—sometimes—thou wilt be gentle?
Little roots of pain are deep, deep in me
Since I saw thee standing in my doorway.)
I have quenched thy torch;
I have plaited thy whip—

I am thy woman.

SONG OF THE FULL CATCH

Here's good wind, here's sweet wind,
Here's good wind and my woman calls me!
Straight she stands there by the pine-tree,
Faithful waits she by the cedar,
She will smile and reach her hands
When she sees my thousand salmon!
Here's good wind and my woman calls me.

Here's clear water, here's swift water,
Here's bright water and my woman waits me!
She will call me from the sea's mouth.
Sweet her pine-bed when the morning
Lights my canoe and the river ends.
Here's good wind, here's swift water,
Strong as love when my woman calls me!

SONG OF BASKET-WEAVING

O Cedar-tree, Cedar, my Mother,
I sit at thy knee
Weaving my basket of grasses,
Weaving for my harvest of berries when the Ripe Days come.
Thy fingers gently touch my hair with fragrance,
Thy mouth drips a song, for the wind has kissed it.
(Love sings in thy mouth!)
The soil listens and answers;
I feel a stirring beneath me and hear buds opening,
The river chants thy song, and the clouds dance to it.
Tonight the stars will float upon thy singing breath,
Gleaming like slanting flocks above the sea.

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All the Earth sings: and its voices are one song!

I alone am silent: I alone, a maid waiting him, the Fate,
The Stirring One, the Planter of the Harvest,
The Basket-Filler.
Cedar, Cedar-tree, Mother!
See how beautiful, how liberal, is my basket,
How tightly woven for the waters of love,
How soft for the treading of children's feet,
How strong to bear them up!
Cedar, Cedar-tree, Mother, remember me—
Ere the Sunset and the Dropping Leaf!

SONG OF CRADLE-MAKING

Thou hast stirred!
When I lifted thy little cradle,
The little cradle I am making for thee,
I felt thee!
The face of the beach smiled,
I heard the pine-trees singing,
In the white sea the Dawn-Eagle dipped his wing.
Oh, never have I seen so much light
Through thy father's doorway!

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(Wast thou pleased with thy little cradle?)

Last night I said: "When the child comes,
If it is a son—
I will trim his cradle with shells;
And proudly I will bear him in his rich cradle
Past the doors of barren women.
All, all, shall see my Little Chief
In his rich cradle!"

That was last night:—
Last night thou hadst not stirred!

Oh, I know not if thou be son—
Strong Chief, Great Fisher, Law-of-Woman,
As thy father is;
Or only Sorrow Woman, Patient Serving Hands,
Like thy mother.
I only know I love thee,—
Thou Little One under my heart!
For thou *didst* move; and every part of me trembled.

I will trim thy cradle with *many* shells,
And with cedar-fringes;
Thou shalt have goose-feathers on thy blanket!
I will bear thee in my hands along the beach,

Singing—as the sea sings,
Because the little mouths of sand
Are ever at her breast.
Oh, Mother-face of the Sea, how thou dost smile—
And I have wondered at thy smiling!

Aühi! Thy little feet—
I felt them press me!
Lightly, lightly
I hear them coming:
Like little brown leaves running over the earth—
Little running leaves, wind-hastened,
On the sudden Autumn trails!
Earth loves the little running feet of leaves:
(Thy little feet!)

O K'antsamiqala'soe, our Praised One,
Let there be no more barren women!
May thou bring no tears, my child,
When I bear thee in thy rich cradle
By the chanting sea-paths where the women labor.

Thou hast stirred!

Oh, haste, haste, little feet—
Little brown feet lightly running
Down the trail of the hundred days!

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The wind is white with rocking bird-cradles;
Day is in the eyes of the Sea.
Ah! never have I seen so much light
Through thy father's doorway.

LOVE SONG TO STORM-DANCER

Sea-Song and Storm-Song
And Drums of the Night!
Drums of love's footfall beating through the dark.
Wind of my pulse and a breaking tide,
And my cry the one note, the one note,
Piercing the sky like a star over thee,
Storm-Dancer with the two high breasts!

I am come as a river among hills
Meeting the sea between cliffs.
O waters flowing to waters in the monotoned might of the
war-chant
With the sod sounding back!
And thy voice— Sweet to the hunter's ear
Is the shrill arrowed hawk before the wind.
O See-gooltha, Storm-Dancer,

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Thy kiss opens the dark
And the moon unfolds in thine eyes.

Thunders of breaking day;
Long foaming surf-lines of light
Sweep the morning beaches
Blown by winds that march and sing,
Tall winds with hunters' feet, swift and trackless,
Scattering the light from Kunae's eyes
And the laughter from his mouth.
Storm-Dancer, Storm-Dancer,
My lips lift from thy kiss,
Flame-bright wings of new desire, spreading to the sun.

Give thy hand and leap with me o'er thy threshold to the good ground.
Run with cool palm to palm pressed, breasts beating,
Thighs by fleet thighs flashing down the white swaying shore:
Brown feet and crags and trampling pines
Tread to the sound
Of Sea-Song and Storm-Song
And Drums of the Dawn!

THE WILD WOMAN'S LULLABY

What shall I sing to thee, babe on my back?
Song of the Eagle that mates with the storm!
Hi-i-ri-i-ki! Ri-eek!
The wild gale is weeping, driven before him
To his nest on the black lone mast of the night;
Swinging, swinging, far out, high out, over the sea!
Hi-i-ri-i-ki! Ri-eek!
Thy father is Eagle-Go-High, chief of thy tribe:
Fiercest in war, wisest in council, swiftest in hunting,
Harshest and fondest in the tent of his woman!

What shall I sing to thee, babe on my back?
Song of the wind that is wanton forever!
Fleeing forever, luring and weeping, laughing and weeping
forever;
Calling forever—calling—for the chase of swift wings,
For the drive and the smite of wild wings,
For the fold of strong wings,
For the sleep in warm wings.
Oo-o-roo-o-rrr-uffff-oo! Thy mother is Storm-Dancer,
daughter of Winds.
What art thou, Little Chiefling, babe of my heart?
The star that I plucked from the mast of the night,
When the wings of thy father outstrove me!

Hi-i-ri-i-ki! Ri-eek!
Eagle-Go-High, this is thy son;
He falls asleep, smiling,
To the scream of thy nesting-call.
Hi-i-ri-i-ki! Ri-i-ki! Ri-eek!

SONG OF THE YOUNG MOTHER

"*M'-m'-m'-M'-n! N'-n'-n'-n'-m!*
Ai-i-he-i—ah-o-he-a-i-ne—
Swing my chiefling fragrantly
On the cedar-branch.
Cedar, cedar, tenderly
Sway to the singing wind.
Bright flying wind, with song in thy white throat
And light in thy wide sea-eyes,
The sky's blue feathers on thy wing—
Oh, blow, blow, gently, softly, wind,
Rock my chiefling, wind,
In his little woven cradle.

When thou wast still a seedling
Deep in mine earth, months deep,

I sat in thy father's doorway making thy cradle.
At the first light, eager I rose to the weaving;
In the dusk my fingers still threaded,
Needing no light.
I remember my mother sat near me often, watching,
Sometimes weeping. Yes, she wept;
Yet answered not when I asked, "Wherefore?"
In the night thou hast waked me at his side—
Dancing in thy dark house to the doors that soon must open
On thy white shining dawn-shores of life;
And I have seen the Moon-Woman's round face
Laughing through the smoke-hole, mocking,
Pointing to thy empty cradle hanging.
Ai! But her smile grew kind! She said,
"Wait a little longer, impatient one;
When next my round face peeps through the smoke-hole
I will seek him at your breast."
Ai-i-hi! Very precious is the man-child!
Ere it is born a woman loves it.
How cam'st thou here, Little Chiefling?
A woman gave thee life!

Yes—my mother wept, watching me weave for thee. . . .
And I have wept, too, a little.

Strange, that pain came with love.
I knew it not until thy father sought me.

Yet—what woman would cast love out?
Gladly in the dusk I waited him. . . .
None told me—not my mother even—of the pang.
So my heart, joyous, sounded a song of drums
Beating the loud wild march for his swift-trampling feet.
The breasts of love were as the eaves of a house,
Jutting through the red mists and the dusk of ending day,
Calling the Hunter to enter to his peace.
The door trembled with strange winds;
He circled my house with the arms of strength,
And took me with weapons. . . . Joy?
Ay. Yet I cried from the depths with a sudden deep cry,
And in grieving earth was the torch quenched.
. . . Darkness . . . and his, his, in that dark . . .
None had told me. . . .
Nor that his strength would leap rejoicing at my cry.

At dawn—it is our custom—I went forth alone
Into the mists that wrap the sleeping cedars
And droop to the pale unwakened sea.
Alone on the dawn's white rim I gathered cedar-boughs,
My tears fell shining among the earth's bright drops;
For now I knew
Why the maiden plaits a whip of cedar-fibre
To give into her husband's hand on her marriage day.
Once I asked my father—it seemed so strange

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A maid should weave and weave a rod for her own sorrow.
He laughed and said: "It is our custom; ay, an old custom.
I know not if it means aught now,
Or ever did have meaning."
My mother sat near. I have remembered that she spoke not;
But, silently, in the shadow of his body, drooped her head.
. . . Ay, 'tis old, the custom,
Old as earth is old;
Ancient as passion,
Pitiless as passion—
Pitiless, pitiless, the earth-way for women!
Bitter it is, as the taste of bright sea-water,
That he, who takes the gift and wields our weaving of desire,
Knows not the meaning of the gift—nor can know ever.
Into the heedless hand of passion
We yield our power-of-pain.
It is the law of the earth-way.

So it is with birth-giving.
Aïi-he! The mightier pang,
The mightier loving—
And thou and thy father, the two Strong Ones,
Glad, glad, of the woman's pain-cry.

"M'-m'-m'-m'n'. Ai-i-he-i
Sleepest thou, little Fatling?

Ay, thou didst long drink at my breast.
(But has not drained it of love.)
Cedar, cedar, carefully
Guard my little brown cone
On thy earth-bending branch.
M'-m'-m'-m'n. Ai-i-he-i
Little life-bud on the bough!
Sleep, sleep, thou drowsy one,
Thou art guarded well.
Ay, rock, rock, safely, safely, Little Man-Child,
A woman watches thee.

KAN-IL-LAK THE SINGER, TO NAK-KU

Nak-Ku, Desired!
Thine eyes speak gifts
But thy hands are empty.
Thy lips draw me
Like morning's flame on a songbird's wing.
I follow—but thy kiss is denied.
I am a hunter alone in a forest of silence.
Under what bough
Are the warm wings of thy kiss folded?

Amid the scent of berries drying
From my high roof I have seen the dusky sea
Trip rustlingly along the sand-floors,
In little moccasins of silver.
Ai, thy little moccasins, Nak-Ku!
But thy feet recede from me like ebbing tides.

I have closed my door:
The heavy cedar-blanket hangs before it.
Since thou comest not,
Better that my narrow pine couch seem wide as a winter field.
The moon makes silver shadows on my floor through the poplars,
The wind rustles the leaves,
Swaying the boughs over the smoke hole;
The little silver shadows run toward my couch—
Ah-hi, Nak-Ku!

I hear the pattering of women on the sand-paths:
Fluttered laughs, bird-whisperings, before my lodge—
"Oh, Lover! Lover!"
Brave little fingers tap upon the cedar-blanket.
But I do not open my door;
Better this grief!

I am thy poet, Nak-Ku,
Faithful to her who has given me
Dreams!

NAK-KU ANSWERS

I have given dreams to Kan-il-lak, the Singer.

Oh what care I, Kan-il-lak,
Though thy hut be full of witches,
Thy lip's melody flown before their kisses?
Know I not that all women
Must to The Singer bring their gifts?
Know I not that to The Singer comes at last
His hour of gift-judging?

I will lie, like a moonbeam, in thy heart.

A hundred gifts shall fall, regarded not.
But where, among the dust of forgetfulness,
The one pearl shell is found again;
The deeps no man has seen
Brimming its lyric mouth with mystical murmurs—
There shalt thou pause,
And render *me* thy song!

NIGHT-SONG OF KAN-IL-LAK

I knew the way thou wentest
By the light along the beach,
And the hidden chanting of the shells
Within the cave.

I knew thy path:
Because the reeds were playing
Dim, melodious songs of hope
By starlit leagues of shore;
And the sea was bright with rapture
Where thy frail canoe
Leapt across the night.

I knew thy port:
Because the winds of prayer,
Loosed to earth from my heart's need,
Shook the leafy dark
And, crying, swept upon the sea;
And the moon of my desire, full-orbed and golden,
Woke the maiden skies
Shrouding the harbor of thy wondering quest.

There shall I follow, there enfold thee,
Spirit of my song!

I SING OF THE DESIRED

A Song of Kan-il-lak, the Singer

My love is a cedar tree
By still waters:
The spirit of the Desired
Is the wind, nesting
As a bird in the branches.
Hearken, O Earth,
To the song in my cedar-tree!
Like the trembling of bells
Is the woman-spirit in my heart's green boughs.

I will sing of her, the Desired,
Till the dawn break
And the waters, waking,
Move in slow rhythm from the gray pensive shores
Out to meet the sun.

I will sing of her, the Desired,
To the small bright flutes
Of the rain,
And chant with mightier overtones
Above the thunder's drum.
When the lightning's spear, striking,
Summons the universe

卐 卐 卐 卐 卐 卐 卐 卐 卐 卐 卐 卐 卐

To choir in massive harmony,
From beyond the storm
I will sing as the stars to come,
In the skyey calms of my cedar-tree.

I will sing of her, the Desired,
Through the mists and the dark,
For—hearken, O Earth—
With the nets of song I have snared the woman-spirit!
Her swift wind-pinions
Are folded:
She nests amid the green boughs of my heart.

DAWN-SONG OF KAN-IL-LAK

Dimly
About the dark sea's marge
Move the shores of dawn;
Fainter
Sounds the one golden note
Of the passing star:
Earth lies mute.

Now
From the hill-riven sky

Showers the white air;
The waking leaves
Send a ripple of song down the mountain-side.
The cedars, sleeping
On the swing of the cliff,
Stir, stand erect,
With slow arms
Push wide their misty doors;
Shadow, like a gull,
Lifts from the gleaming sea.
Morning, with bells in her bright hair,
Enters the world!

So to my heart comest thou.

SUN-SONG OF KAN-IL-LAK

I love thee, Desired, with the man-strength of sun-light:
Gleam, gleam, my song, on the heart of the woman,
Like noon on the lily-pool.
The blue lake's melody calls through my reed;
O song from love's shadowless water
Flow to the heart of the woman—
Drink, drink, Desired!

Down the river of stars, past the moon-cliffs abloom
With the birches of dream, I sought for the woman:
At the day's flood-tide I have found thee!
Why hast thou hid in the mist of the birches
Like a young wind awaiting the dawn?
Noon's fire sparkles the pool:
O shine, shine, my song, on the heart of the woman!
As blue sky to the water, as shimmering air to the lily,
Out from the mists of thy waiting, I claim thee, Desired,
With clear eyes and a love sun-strong.

STARS

A Song of Kan-il-lak

O Splendor invading the dark
Over the earth of my yearning,
Over my roaming sails!
Pure radiance of an unimagined goal
Too far and chaste for seeking,
Star-Woman—
Leanest thou down to my heart tonight?

I have not won thee—
Who may win the stars?

Thou art pure gift:
No merit mine but that mine eyes have seen thee and my
heart here knows thee.
Here on an unrevealéd sod my feet are stayed;
My spear and paddle cast upon this alien strand,
Shadowed and unexplored.
I know not if the day will show
This canyon bright with living green,
Its waters streaked with darting coral and silver,
Its stone clefts ringing from the feet of deer
And wincing under fiery sun,
Its hollows cool with flowers;
Or if the arrow of a bleak dawn here shall pierce me—
I question not, I care not!

Dearer than the having joy is the peace of high desire;
More precious is yearning than full hands.
Thou hast starred my heart with dream
That is all hunger and all calm, its own fulfilment.
Clear, windless and still, this vast where I have found thee;
And here, beneath the lustre of thy look,
I pour my soul,
Like deep cool waters, darkling with rapture,
Their tides restrained to mirror thee.

A PRAYER OF KAN-IL-LAK

Song-Giver!
Bless my faltering lips
With the rhythm of Thy truth:
Ring from my heart melodic bells
To wake my tribe to worship.
From the mount of prayer
My drums shall beat unto the dawn
The march of Thy feet across the sea;
My pipes call through the slanting night
The echo of Thy harmonies,
Tuning the muted pines to the starry chord.
I will lift my reed
In the clear, sparkling noon of Thy benignest look,
And from its shining stem
Pour out Thy lyric loveliness
To brim the day's bright circle.

Kia-Kunae, God!
Touch me with tenderness—I will translate thee.
Tune me with faith—and revealing song, unwearied,
Shall fuse with my tribesmen's tired hope.
Above the dust of barter and the murk of fame
Lift me with love!

In Thy presence is the music of white waters!
Thence flowing,
Thy Singer's ecstasy
With psalms of healing
Shall bathe the wounded world.

CHIEF CAPILANO GREETS HIS NAMESAKE, THE MOUNTAIN

White Head of Waters, White Head of Light—
Capilano! Cla'h'ya!
White head of the chief to thee lifts greeting.
I am hoar with years as thou, great Father;
My hair hangs like the dropping ice
Of thy highest hushed waters.
I have lived a hundred years at thy foot,
Singing the prayer of thanks for life:
"O Kia-Kunae, Great Spirit One, Great Kind One,
I praise thee for life, I serve thee with living,
I bless Thee that in kindness Thou hast made the earth
And with love covered it.
Yea, by Thy kindness, men and trees stand forth,
Silently to me speak they the speech of brothers;
For delights, the little rivers come among the hills,
Shining with the smiles of women;

卐 卐 卐 卐 卐 卐 卐 卐 卐 卐 卐 卐 卐

Ay, as the merry murmuring of many maidens
Are the rivers; swift and tender in their coming.
(Because Thou art kind, Kunae, Thou madest women.)
It is the morn, Kunae; I pray, I praise Thee."
Ah—! how many hundred years hast thou prayed thus, Capilano?
With thee this day, Mountain-Father, I thank Kunae for another dawn.
I am girt with blanket and rope of cedar-fibre,
In my ear is a ring of fine bark;
Thou art belted with innumerable pine-trees,
To thee they are smaller than feathers:
The sun is the cedar-ring in thine ear,
The long sea asleep is the spear in thy hand.
It is still, with pale lights on the distant blade,
Pointing at rest to islands beyond the dropping sky.
Thou art come forth, as a hunter, to the dawn;
Herding the antlered shadows down the forest slope.
Their swift fleeing hoofs strike fire from the beaten sand-shores of morning,
And the black wraiths swoon upon the bright opening sea.
With blood of his proud throat crimsoning the eastern sky
The great stag of the dark in the van falls dying.

Here was I chief before the coming of the white man;
Now is his village spread from this sea beyond my sight.

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His canoes are floating villages;
They go by with a great noise and a black smoke;
His deeds are mighty; they leap with roaring clouds and thunder-fires
Into the blue quiet morning and the white moon-sky.

Yet have I heard no sound mightier
Than the sun shattering the night
On thy stone shoulder, Capilano.
Yet have I seen no sight more wonderful and fair
Than the coming of the light,
When day, the silver-winged gull, down-swooping, finds the sea.
Yet have I known no thing sweeter, stronger,
Than the smell of piney woods and blue rippling sea-water;
And the kindness of Kunae-Kia, the Living One,
Waking the heart of the old chief
To another dawn of life!

SONG OF THE LITTLE SON

Hear me! I shout, "*Ki-Ki-y!*"
See me! I shake my little spear!
I am Leqa-a-toq, the Little Son—

The strong little, swift little, fierce little Son of the Chief.
Ki! Ki-Ki-y!
When I stamp my mighty little foot, my mother weeps;
She fears me; she trembles;
(Also old Bi'iq, my grandmother.)
The earth trembles, the sea shakes;
My little feet, stamping, rock all the canoes of the world!
The clouds, like screaming windy birds,
Fly, fly before my little willow bow.
The eagles screech, leaping to the pine-tops,
When they see me fit my sparkling red-feathered little arrow
To my gleaming bow-string!
Running on the beach above the glistening bay,
For sport, I shake my tall little spear—
Ok-Ki! see the great shadow on the sea!
Kok-wat-Tyee, old Salmon-Chief,
Beckons with his tail all other fishes,
And dives to the bottom of the world!
He fears me! *Ki-Ki-Ki-y!*
Tlet-la, the Fisher, calls from his big canoe,
Where my father's twenty tribesmen paddle,
"O Leqa-a-toq! Little Son! we pray thee
No longer shake thy frighting spear!
If thou scare all the salmon from the sea,
How shall we eat dried fish when winter dances?
Thy tribe will die!"

卐 卐 卐 卐 卐 卐 卐 卐 卐 卐 卐 卐 卐

Ai! The sweet smoked fish! I hide my spear;
Once more the sea is full of salmon,
Swimming to the Fisher's nets.
I run among the berry bushes,
Crying my fierce *"Ki-Ki-y!"*
And laugh to see the wild wolves fleeing.

See me! I jump the highest log—
Ki-Ki-Ki-y!—
My stuck-out little fingers pierced the sky.
"Leqa-a-toq!" . . . Who calls? . . .
(Ho! 'Tis but my trembling mother.)
When the beach crawled longly down
To the low sea, at morn,
With my sharp little hunting knife
I killed the fat Father of the Clams!
"Leqa-a-a-toq!" . . . (Ho! *Ai-ai?* Angrily she calls me!)
Farewell, Slaves:
I hear the loud voice of the Great Chief's Great Woman calling—
The high voice of the Great Chief's Great Little Son's Great Mother,
"Leqa-a-a-toq co-omes!"
See me!
Grinding, flashing, my long, white, many, fierce little teeth,

I run, I run, I run— *Ki-Ki-Ki-y!*—
To eat my big little supper.

SONG OF THE BEAR-KILLER

I stand at the foot of your mountain, Black Bear!
I am the Hunter, and I climb, I climb, to kill.
Oh, black is the death I bring,
Like the cloud of your hairs;
My arrows are white as the glare of your mouth,
Braver my heart than the rocks that guard you.
I go singing your death through the forest,
My voice is a storm, the trees bend—
"*Ny-uss-kuh!* Behold me!
I am the Killer of Black Bear!
I am the Killer of Black Bear! Ho! Ho!"

Shake, shake your blackness and roar with thunder;
I fear not— I am the Hunter!
At dawn I saw the shadow on my knife-blade;
'Tis a sign that it will drink.
You are black, you have eaten the dark,
The night is in your belly.
I will scatter it red with stars;

I will put the slim death-moon in your mouth,
And the last long winter in your heart.
"*Ky-y-i!* Behold me!
I am the Killer of Black Bear!
I am the Killer of Black Bear! Ho! Ho!"

THE UNWILLING LOVER PRAYS FOR COURTING WEATHER

Rain Chief stalks through the forest
On his tens-and-tens gray legs,
Cold, wet, long legs like a salmon's tail splashing!
But I must tramp the wild shore
Singing the lover's Song of the Search,
Singing of old Bibba's daughter, fat Woo-hela;
Fat, rich, strong Woo-hela,
Daughter of rich old Bibba.

I have piled wood at Bibba's door,
I have laid deer's meat on his threshold,
From a mighty cedar log with fire and flint
I have dug a great canoe for Bibba—
Oh sore arms! Oh sore sinews of arms! love-pains! *ai-i!*
He has said, "Woo-hela is thine."

Therefore must I wander forth, asking Earth
To speak Woo-hela's name to my heart.
"Dsa-atseks, Mother, speak to the earth in me:
What is the name of my woman?
At dusk, at dusk, my torch will burn;
My time is come. Show me her house!"
If I make no love-journey for her, Woo-hela will sulk.

Now, of him, that unknown one, far back,
Who first made this courting custom in a wet land,
I say, "May the old black Bear-Devil
Scratch up his foolish bones,
And the foul black Raven-Devil peck them!"

I look up through the smoke-hole— *Ai-k!* wet! gray! wet!
Neqnoq, I wish to wed; let me come forth!
Can I carry a torch through your waters?
Still his tens-and-tens gray legs go kicking!
There is no hope of clear sky
Till I stand in the wooden mouth
Of Great Bear, my mother's totem,
And pray for courting weather.
"Neqnoq! Neqnoq! Samayits! Samayits!
(Chief! Chief! Have pity! Have pity!)
Ramra'den tgyine'e wal tler'nt nesegya'tent;
(Look down and see what those whom you made are doing);

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Man sa ikya si'ent ada ma do dsant!
(Pull up your foot and sweep off your face!)"

Oh fat Woo-hela!
The deer's meat, the wood piled, the great canoe I dug;
Must I also pray for you—
Ai! till my throat is like a hollow log burned?
Samayits! Samayits!
My nose tickles with my sacred whining,
But Neqnoq still goes stalking—

Sam-a-yits! Sam-a-a-a-yi-its!

SONG OF THE CONQUEROR OF WOMEN

I am Mo-an-mat-ma, the Dandy,
My tribesmen, jealous, call me Many-Faces;
But the name over my house-door
Is *Conqueror of Women.*
The Moon-Woman's finger wrote it there.
I am as that red deer of stars
In the night's skyey forest,
Ever pursued by the tossing foam of maidens' love—
(Froth from the mouths of hunting wolves!)—
Ak! and some that be not maidens—

My blind-eyed kinsmen, look to the little straying feet
Of such—and this—and that—*um'm'm'm*—
Look to it! They follow me,
As the twinkling foam-track of hungry stars
Endlessly trails after him, the antlered one, the Red Star,
But takes him never! *Aik-ki-yi-i!*
I am the Conqueror of Women!
My grass cap is set round with red breasts of red-breasted
woodpeckers;
My hair is sleek, black, long, bead-twined,
It flashes like the watered fins of Old Whale,
Striking through the sea in the sun.
It is priceless as the fur of seals;
It is heaven-blossomed like Raven's wing.
I am tall, tall, tall and proud; proud, proud, proud and
strong;
Strong, strong, strong like—
Like all the men of the Haidas;
Like all save me, who am tallest, proudest, strongest!
My moccasins are of white doe-skin much embroidered;
Five little rows of smallest white owl-feathers
Go round and round
The star-signs, the love-signs, worked in colored grasses.
(Oh my kinsman, Oh Ho-al-es, would you wed with
No-ig tonight
If you knew—oh, la la!—who worked my moccasins?)

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I am the Conqueror of Women!
My body is swiftly strong as the storm in spring,
And beautifully large as the pale gold sand beneath the moon.
I am long-limbed and thewed like the cliff,
And curved in mighty curves like the shore about the sea.
My voice in love-making is as birds warring:
It is as sea-gulls shrieking, in the ears of women;
In anger—*ai-k!* how terrible in anger is my voice!
It splits the hearts of women, like Big Crow pecking clam-shells.
Ai! They follow, follow my bright moccasins
Through the crooked trails of the woods;
They break my hunting scent; they scare my fishes.
Ak! ak! ak! love-seekers! husband-snatchers!
Foolish, foolish and unwise! you dance after a ghost!
I am Many-Faces, the Dandy; I wed none.
I wed none, I miss none. I lose none.
I am the Conqueror of Women!

THE JEALOUS ONE AT THE BERRY-PICKING

Berries are ripe.
Oh, *hi na-na-ya*—
Berries are ripe!

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In the green shallows of the bushes
The leaves flitter-flutter,
Like little sea-waves,
When Yu-ahte, the Young Wind, treads lightly,
Laughing, laughing, with eyes shut,
Saying, saying, what he speaks not—
(*Tst—st—st—* Little Wind—*st!*)

Flutter, flutter little leaves,
Whisper and be very angry!
Yet shall the ten brown fingers of the maidens
Strip your green boughs of the ripe pink berries!
Salmon-berries, Salmon-berries,
Hiding in the leafy shallows,
We will catch you without nets,
We will spear you with our little sharp nails,
We will snare you with our ten brown fingers.
Berries pink and red and clustered
Like salmon-mother's little eggs—
Only they are not salt with the sea,
They are sweet and wet
From the sun and the mist on the flower.

O Maidens—
O Wahlaka, Nudz, Aidzumka!
Hearken while I sing the Tale of the Berry.
It is I, Kot-'e'-o—they call me Jealous One

(It is a lie: I am not so!)
Once, once, far, far, long back,
When that old man the Sun was a baby,
Rocking on the tree of Heaven;
And the earth sat still and fed him strength
From the thousand gushing mountain-tips
Of her warm brown breast—
That so he might grow swiftly strong
To run every day across the great world
And carry the Kettles of Light—
(*Ya-ya!* Nudz puts all her berries in her mouth;
Yet she is fat enough already!)
. . . In those days, O Maidens,
All this forest was a river,
A flowing green river of the sea;
And the small pink salmon—

Oh—oh—Maidens!—
(They do not listen to me.)
Na! Aidzumka is dreaming of her lover,
Who wanders in the forest even now:
He sings the song of the Search,
He asks the Earth if it is she.
Ay, she wishes for the twilight
When he will come—!
Oh *na-na-ya!*

She fears there is not earth enough
In the floor of her house
To quench the torch of Hundala.
As if he cared for her
More than for another! eh, Maidens?
(Her father is richer than my father—
That is all.)

Nudz claws the bush and feeds her great mouth
Like Te-hoa in the Spring.
Nudz will have children with great mouths like
Black Bear!
(*La'n'ya!* who would wed such a mouth?
What man is so rich?)
Wahlaka picks, picks, picks,
Like a woodpecker!
She is so greedy to fill her basket.
Well, well, Maidens?
You will not listen to me?
That is foolish, for none tells the Tale of the Berry
better than I.
This I know; for I have heard all the maidens tell it.
La'n'ya! It was a poor tale!
(They laugh! They wag the head!)
Pick, pick, pick, poor Wahlaka!
For I know well

If your basket is not full
Your old mother will beat you with the cedar-whip,
Or with ropes of hard, dry kelp.
Oh-ho-ya, Maidens—
Wahlaka screams like the dark owl,
She snorts like a whale in the trough of the sea
When she feels the biting whip!
Well, let her be modest—
I am never beaten.

Ai, hi! I wish Wahlaka had *my* mother!
My mother is a Haida woman;
The Haida women are most big and strong and fierce.
Ai; if I could hear my mother beat Wahlaka!
Who is Wahlaka,
That she should catch old Noan's son?
Why did he run to her with his fire?
Tst—st-st-st!
Because her house is the next house to his—
But for the ten little houses between—
And mine is too far. That is all!
Certainly I will kick over your basket, Wahlaka.

Aidzumka, Aidzumka!
You have only four berries in your basket!
Again I say, only four! Did I not see?

Are you thinking of Hundala?
La'n'ya! oh la!
He brought his torch to me,
But I would not quench it!
Nay, I sat in the moonlight and laughed.
(I looked very beautiful in the moonlight.)
Besides, my father is not rich;
Hundala cares only for money.
He is a coward,
Like old Noan's son;
He feared to come to me—
I am too proud.
Even Mo-an-mat-ma has sought me!

Aidzumka! *hahi*, Aidzumka—
Maiden Empty-Basket!
Though you are rich,
Hundala will not wed you,
You are too idle!
He will give his torch to old Teho-k'-yak,
The Woman-Bear.
She picks more berries than you.
Tst-st-st! You Shame-among-Maidens!
So I will call you;
For you think thoughts unbecoming
While your fingers hang idle,

Shame-among-Maidens!
Ay, redden, redden, like the berry;
For I will tell it in the village.
All the old wives shall hear
The thoughts of Aidzumka with her empty basket.
Clk! illick! Clk! illick! he, he, he!
She chokes, she is red with shame,
She is black with anger!
Clk illick, he, he! She runs down the hill.
Oh hi, hahi! Aidzumka!
I would you were my sister,
That I might tell your unbecoming thoughts
To my strong, fierce mother.
Ay! there would be music in the village,
A roaring and a dancing!
You would sing like the wind through a rock.
She would beat out the wild shrill sound
Like Man-es-tet-su, the priest's Drum-beater,
Until you were modest—as I am;
That would not be soon.
Clk illick! he he he—how she runs and cries!
Clk illick, he he he!
See, Wahlaka! Look, Nudz! Nay! See, look!
Oh—? Ai-i? Ah-h?
You will not speak to me?
You turn the back? You put your heads together?

(Quick, toe. Kick, toe!)
He-he-st-st, illick—
There goes Walaka's basket! It was full!

So, so. I crush the berries,
I kick the basket, it rolls far down the hill.
Oh haha, oh illick, st-st!
Nudz runs with her after the basket.
Ah, hi, na-ya! Listen to Wahlaka screaming.
She thinks of her mother.
I would she had *my* mother!
Nudz calls names to me.
Ya! Big Nudz, Clumsy Nudz!
Your mother was an oil-whale!
And your father, he was a-a-a—
He too was an oil-whale!
You drip fat!
Clk illick he he he! ick-ick-ick-kichi-e!
(How Wahlaka cries in catching her empty basket!)

Well—I care nothing!
They were greedy, all three.
They stripped the bush, they left no fruit for me.
My basket is almost empty,
And the sky is dark with twilight.
I am all alone.

'Tis now the Woods-ghost walks!—with the serpent in
his hand!
Ai-i! ai-i! and the two black bears!

Oh-hi-ha! oi-ick! oi-eek!
What is that? there—there—stalking?
It is tall. It is silent.
It comes swiftly through the black pines.
It is the Woods-ghost with the long hissing serpent in
his hand,
Ai-i! ai-i! Oh-ah the Woods-ghost. *Oi-ick!* the—!
Nay—nay—Nay-y—it is my mother—!
It is my strong, fierce mother, the Haida woman.

Ak! ak!
Nay—wait, my mother, till I tell thee.
It is true I have no berries—
Nay—wait—*ak! ai-hi! oi-ick!*
They lied! I did not so!
They ran and told thee lies!
The berries? Nay— 'Tis true I have none; they
took—
Ai!-ak! ak-i-hi! ak! ak! ah-k-k-k!
Ah-k-k-k! oi-i-eek! O-i-eeek-ow-ow-oo-yah-yah-h-h-h!

SONG OF THE FOUR MORNINGS

Spring Dawn

White across the clear green grass
Comes one with cold sparkling step.
Unseen his tall floating form, unheard his voice;
(He knows not yet the first word, the word that wakes us!)
It is Pai-iya-Kwi.
Like the feet of a young chief, which have not strayed to love,
Is the cool bright swiftness of his coming.
The ridges, wind-topped, front the East
Where Pai-iya-Kwi was born.
On the western slopes we dwell, we the Coast Dwellers,
Facing the warm west.
Yet we love the coming of Pai-iya-Kwi
From the hidden place of sunrise.
We love the breath of his young cool thoughts
And the white pattering of his feathered moccasins;
(They stir the small grass, they toss the little sand!)
We love the rattling of his hundred red arrows
Where the stark crimson willows stab the canyon-side
To drip waters.
We love the clear shining from his eyes;

They have seen nothing nearer than the windy sky
And the sea's long ripple, bright and salt.
Ai-hi! we love Pai-iya-Kwi!
Because he knows not the sun will set more crimson than the willows,
And its wounded strength sleep upon the dark;
Because he knows not the still sod stirs beneath the grasses
With a life swifter than his feet.
O Pai-iya-Kwi, Youth, seeing not clouds and shadows;
Seeing not Love waits!

Summer Dawn

She comes— Tem-Eyos-Kwi—
The maiden who has known love!
Last night love touched her in the House of Waiting.
Love hid the seeds of life in her garments.
In the wind of her walking they are scattered;
All the sod will bloom with them:
None shall be lost; because of her gladness, the gladness of Love Known.

(*Ah-hi-i*—! She sees not the earth as we see it—
We who were not overtaken by love in the House of Waiting.)

Wake, women; maidens and wives!
Greet Tem-Eyos-Kwi!
Greet her with feet dancing;
With songs of the heart and lips trembling to silence,
Hands that lift their wonder to the breast
Yet touch not the flesh.

Wake, sons, lovers, young chiefs, hunters with arrows!
Sharpen the darts, make strong, bend the bow:
Keen, keen as light and clear as the wind be your eyes!
The women await you in secret places.
They have hidden themselves in the leafy shelters:
All the green leagues of the forest are ashake with invitation.
The quick beating of their hearts is the whisper along the bending grass.
The sod grows warm—. Oh men, Summer-Dawn is the spirit of the women!
They have washed their hearts with prayer,
And their bodies with juices of cedar:
Perfumed and dried by the wind they have come up from the shore—
The great hosts of the women—
Unwrapping themselves from the mists of the morning.
They have entered the forest with the footfalls of muted music,

With light tossing steps like the spray on long beaches.
The swinging trees drip dew;
With lines of sparkling rain they point the way the women
have gone,
Leaving all the paths to them open.

(Harken! they follow Tem-Eyos-Kwi, singing)

"Come, come, O swift and strong!
We are the women: seek us.
Our hearts, like little swallows, nest above the secret pools.
Oh say, shall not the winged dart pierce,
And the shadow of the bended bow
Stir the still, deep pools?
O the waters shall sparkle and leap and mingle,
And brim at your lips. O men!
They shall be poured out and drip upon a chief's feet:
They shall fill the hollows of his house with children;
Flowing in laughter and whispers and little cries
As smoke through the smoke-hole at evening!
Ai! Ah! Ai! Women! Waken the soil with freshets;
Bear joy upward as a canoe with sails, swifter than paddles.
O men, Hunters of Life,
We are the Harborers, the Fosterers—the women!
Seek us!"

(It was the women, the Harborers, the Fosterers, who rose first,
And followed Tem-Eyos-Kwi:
They called to the men.)

The men go forth like one!
Lightning and heat are their weapons, hurled crashing before them.
Their hairs spreading wide give black wings to the sun,
As a cloud filled with eagles blown up from the sea.
They enter the forest with the tramp of thunder and the darkness of storm:
And the song of the women is stilled.
The cry of offering ascends, it passes the swooping shadows;
There is a sigh through the forest of wings sinking—
Then the hush.

On the leaves is a sweet whisper of rain,
Whispered sweetness of pangs past.
The warm soil drinks the coolness of tears—
Tears that are dropping melodies
Because cunning hands and strong have shaken the living cords.

The skies part, the black wings fold;
The Sun-Chief's canoe rides on the upper blue with furled sails;

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Tem-Eyos-Kwi, laughing, is at the paddle,
Our village is drenched with light.
(*Ai-i!* Tem-Eyos-Kwi is glad because love has overtaken us:
Because now we see the earth as she sees it.)
Two by two, they come up from the forest—the men and the women.
The women's smiles are the little sun-tipped clouds
Floating across the face of the mountain:
The look in their eyes is deeper than seas.
High in the light the men lift their heads.
On their clear brows is the mystic mark
Of those from whom a great dream has gone forth.
Firmly they hold the hands of the women,
Who have given peace to their strength, and a meaning.
Together, together, the Race-Makers enter the lodges.

Autumn Dawn

Plem-Salia-Kwi is the Hunter returning with plenty,
And the Fisher from the green sea.
His shoulders are heavy with deer's meat;
His great canoe is slow with salmon.
We listen to the nudge of its tall ghost-prow
In all our landing coves.
We hear the ground-wind of his moccasins

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Rustling the forest floors.
Swifter than joy they speed on the purple paths of the fall—
Paths stained with fruitage, oozing odors.

He comes to us, his little brown blood-brothers by the sea,
Through the dark silver blue spruces, and the massed sea-
green cedars,
Through the brown and crimson maples,
And the cottonwoods' dropping gold;
Through the pearl shimmer of the naked birches.
Plem-Salia-Kwi's blanket is the white, broidered mist.
Its fringes are dew-bells
That tinkle little whispers down the mountain.
While he still slept,
Lake-Woman, Mother of Waters, wove him his blanket:
Wove it of the wool of the mist herds
Drifting down from the cloud-ranges.
She patterned it in bead-drops, sun-colored,
With blue ravelings from sky-patches,
With pink shells from the beaches of morning.
He bears the strong bent bow of the hills,
And the swift wind-arrows, scarlet-shafted with dawn:
And the tall spear of falling light,
October light, the mystical weapon.
Ah-h! Ahi! Ah-h! We sing to Kunae
For the beauty and harvest of Plem-Salia-Kwi.

The little children
In laughing, leaping, running, stumbling,
Pattering and creeping down to the beaches,
Give thanks for the harvest of sweet, dried berries
And the plenty of the breast.
They go down to converse with the swallows
Who bathe in the small leaf-locked pools.
Ah-hi! the shrill joy of the children,
At the whirring and flashing of brown wings in bright water,
And the twittering of news from all the nests of the sea-coast!
The pine-logs make a good smoke, blue, clear, sweet-smelling,
The cooking baskets bubble with water;
The women chant, while they heat stones for the baking,
Concerning the large baskets of food they have cooked,
And the racks of crimson smoked salmon,
And the many trays of dried berries,
Sun-baked, and jellied in long strips, packed in cool leaves.
They behold their men coming up from the caves
With hammers and copper, with silver and cunning shells,
And they clatter at their ears, saying:
"Is not thy roof fragrant with cedar-trays of berries?
Have I not stored thy house full?
Hast thou not a little wayward son of thee at each of thy hands?

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Is the cradle on my back—the cradle of thy despised little
daughter—empty?
Where is another such wife?
Speak, O thou Hunter of Life,
That caughtest me unknowing in the pine shadows—
(*Ah-hi-i! Il-ak-il-ak!*)
When I danced after Tem-Eyos-Kwi!"

The men answer not:
But in their eyes, behind their lashes, is a little smile,
Like light in the depths of a reedy pool.
Early, ere their clattering women woke,
They went down to the caves with their axes.
They have digged copper and silver and brilliant shells
From a secret store.
Tink-tonk, tink-tonk, tink-tonk!
Through the forest rings the song of their hammers,
The silent men are hammering rings for their women:
Rings, bracelets, anklets, for their women,
Glad gifts for their women, their mates.

For the silent men have seen
That Plem-Salia-Kwi walks not alone.
Through all his paths, *She* follows him—his woman, his
mate—
Sharing his blanket.

She has no other garment, her breast is bare,
She has given all to him she follows;
So comes he with plenty!
He tires not forever on his leagues of march,
Because her feet are set to his footprints,
And the gleam of her bare hand slants across his shoulder.
Therefore the silent men, the Hunters and Providers of Life,
Greet Plem-Salia-Kwi, the Harvest-Bringer, their blood-brother the Mated One,
With the tink-tonk, tink-tonk, tink-tonk of bright hammers,
Shaping gifts for their women;
Ringing their thanksgiving song for full joys—
Full baskets, full cradles, the full arms of sleep.

Winter Dawn

The dark rolls back;
Like dropped stars
The willows shine on the sides of the water-courses.
Their ice blades clash
Making a slow thin music.
So wakes he, Tem-Sotetc-Kwi;
So comes he slowly—like a slow thin music.
Ah-ah-hi-i, Brothers! Lovers of trails and sea-paths!

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It is the time of sorrow and the time of shutting-in:
For he has come again—Tem-Sotetc-Kwi;
With heavy winds,
Like frozen ropes of cedar, hoary,
Uncoiling from his thighs
To bind the world.

I have seen his white moccasins upon the mountain;
His steps have hushed the waters
Of the great and little falls;
The rushing rivers are stopped.
He has fed the lake's watery breast to the white bear
That follows him.
The canoes of the Coast Dwellers are hung under the roofs
Like empty cradles:
We can no longer rock on the wings of the Great Blue
Heron!
He has taken away the brown fields,
Where our bare feet danced with Autumn
At the feast of berries and maize:—
The bare brown fields that were glad
When we drummed with our bare brown feet,
Singing: *Hoy-mah-ah! Hoy a-mah!*

Gravely, with bowed hearts, we greet you,
O Tem-Sotetc-Kwi, Snow-Chief, Ice-Hunter,

Priest of the Long White Moons!
Slowly, slowly, like thin music,
Murmur the sorrow-chant,
Coast Dwellers, my brothers:
For Tem-Sotetc-Kwi has carved the death totem
Over Swiya's house-door—
"*Q-ulx-se-wag-ila*—making pure!"
Our Mother, Swiya—Swiya, our Mother—is dead.
Sorrow, sorrow, my tribe, for Swiya!
Much joy had Swiya, our Mother, who loved three lovers!
As a maid, boldly she went forth
And met Spring among the willows;
He pierced her with hope.
Singing, she entered the green doors of Summer;
Singing she came out, girdled with fragrance.
She took the yellow harvest moon in her hands,
And waited in the maize-fields behind our village.
Autumn clasped her there in the fields; he crowned her with maize,
He filled her pouch with berries, he gave her much deer's meat.

Autumn, Feast-Maker! Dearest was he among her three lovers—

卐 卐 卐 卐 卐 卐 卐 卐 卐 卐 卐 卐 卐

He was the strong one: he gave the most food: he was the last.
Ai! great joy had Swiya, our Mother, who loved three lovers,
And took their gifts.
All their gifts were ours: Swiya, our Mother, kept nothing back.
Now she lies bare, her hands are empty, her face is cold;
Her eyelids are shut, for her eyes are in the place of death,
Under white eyelids!— *Q'ulx-se-wag-ila!*
Tem-Sotetc-Kwi has carved the death-totem over Swiya's door.
Slowly, softly, like thin music, murmur the sorrow-chant
For Swiya, our Mother. Swiya, our Mother, is dead.

Q'uls-se— Q'ulx-se-wag-ila wa!
Gravely, with bowed hearts we greet you,
O Tem-Sotetc-Kwi, Snow-Chief, Ice-Hunter,
Priest of the Long White Moons!

INDIAN SPRING

I on the thighs of God, as the leaf on the willow!
I the song of his lips and the light of his mirth,
I the wind between his frontlets, the desire to his children,
I the sure arrow of his heart!

卐 卐 卐 卐 卐 卐 卐 卐 卐 卐 卐 卐 卐

I the drums of his walking where the mountains roll the
echo,
I the bellying mist on his seas that sail the world;
I the speech of his rivers to the stark and silent places,
I the chant of his stars, descending through the dark to the
sea-call,
I the reedy flutes of his peace!

I the wings of his cliffs, thrilling to the morning,
I the carol of his cloud-gnomes leaping through the moon,
I the mild content of his slow, waddling, sniffing bear;
I the dartle of his sands, I the gossip of his fishes
'Neath the coast where his ancient bearded cedars lie a-snor-
ing in the breeze.
I the goodwill of his sun, I the dew of his promise,
I the gratitude of the small, sweet grass!

I the seed in his spilling pouches, I the spear that wounds to
harvest;
I the life-bringer, I his servant to the law that is forever;
I the linked hands of unborn children—
Mystic fetter round the loins of men and women;
I the sober splendor of their fusion, I the pæan of their hope!
Oh, I on the thighs of God, as the leaf on the willow!

SPRING SONG OF THE EARTH WITCH

Red-throated Spring is calling me,
O Old Man Winter—man that I have loved
In the dark pine thatch beneath the falling snows;
Red-throated Spring is calling me by the brookside.
I hear his pipe of scarlet willows
Ruddy-shrilling through the wind,
With its thousand notes of flame
Piping to the young wild Dawn by the brookside.

O Man that I have loved,
In the dark pine thatch beneath the falling snow,
I must go!
For my silent songs have wakened
And my lips are thirsting for his kiss,
For the kiss
Of red-throated Spring by the brookside;
And my heart is leaping from your hands,
O Old Man Winter,
With the sound of the blue ice cracking to his thousand notes
of flame.
I must go
Where his scarlet pipes are calling me,
To the dance of the young wild Dawn by the brookside!

SONG OF THE LONG RIVER

All day my songs
Sang beside the River,
Sang on my lips like my lover's kiss.
I asked no more:
"Tell me, how long, Sky, how long is the River
That flows on and on yet stays forever,
Bearing my songs oh whither, whither?"

I said only:
"When the starry wampum is offered,
When the twilight smoke signals
That the woman, Swiya, camps beneath the willows
And her tent of willows,
Red spring willows,
Is open—is open—open. . . .
Will he come, the Man of Arrows,
Like a white hawk skimming
Down the circling path of waters,
Down the tide
Of the silver singing River,
That winds—and, winding, beckons—
Like a low-hung girdle round the hills?"

I said only:
"Come! When the day is darkening,
Come, Swift and Wounding One, to my lips;
Where the two crimson wings,
The wings of my flying songs, are folded!
The flesh of my songs is sweeter, O Wounding One,
Than wild turkeys;
Softer than feathers is Swiya's breast, swelling with love.
Moor thy white canoe
By the running River
Till lily-picker Dawn shall pluck it
From the black-tipped clustering bulrushes of night.
Leave the shallower tide
Of the silver singing River, for the deeper flowing;
Leap to the still-winged silence of thy mate!"

When the starry wampum is offered,
When the twilight smoke signals
That the Woman, Swiya, camps beneath the willows;
And her tent of willows,
Red spring willows,
Is open—is open—open. . . .

SONG OF THE FRUITFUL BREAST

Kitsilano—Spirit dwelling—
Dwelling in the waters!
Hear the song I sing beside the waters,
Running waters.
Lave my breast of darkness,
Bear away the burden,
The burden of its darkness,
Spirit dwelling.

Far—far—
From between the feet of Mountain
Treading down the sky-path
Where the sod was wounded
By the arrowed star,
Come these waters, running waters,
Rippling round my breast:
Rippling soft and tepid
Like the hands of children,
Little creeping children
Feeling for the breast.

Kitsilano—Spirit dwelling!—
Hear the song I sing

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Of the Woman, Swiya, lonely, lonely by the waters.
From between the feet of Mountain
Treading down the sky-path,
Loose the arrowed star!
Where the sod is wounded
Flood with living waters, rippling waters—
Soft and tepid hands of children,
Little creeping children
Feeling for the breast.

Kitsilano, Spirit dwelling,
Dwelling in the waters, running waters!
Lave my breast of darkness,
Bear away the burden,
The burden of its darkness:
Spirit dwelling!

TWO LYRICS FROM THE KOOTENAY

Parting Song

You have gone, leaving my nights lonely.
How shall I know your trail?
My longing follows your footprints;
I will follow my longing,

Though I see not you nor your footprints,
And only my sorrow clasps my hand.

Ambush

I lie in the tall grass by the berry trail:
I can see her door, and the sky.
Five hawks hang in the sky
Over her door—
A strong, wild wind shall come!

Song of the Birth

K'antsamiq'ala Soe gives life.
He is the life, so comes birth.
He is the spirit, so comes being,
He is His Name—the All-Encompassing,
Supreme Highest Praised One.
With His finger makes He the little picture on the earth,
With His breath He blesses it, smiles and is content—
So comes a man!
Yea, a great man, mighty, kind, and swift,
Is but a little picture of the Highest One
That grows from a babe: (it grows because it is of life).

卐 卐 卐 卐 卐 卐 卐 卐 卐 卐 卐 卐 卐

So He grows also, in the making and blessing of men;
Because He is the life, never ending, never quiet,
Because He is the Strong One, the Pure Maker, never ceasing from good.
How great a thing therefore is this little birth!
Men and women of the tribe, I am His priest and charge you;
Now comes this picture from His hand, sacred and mystical;
See ye mar not His little picture, blest with His breath.
Give it kindness with highest love, give it joy very wisely.
This is your service of thanks to Him for making you
With the life that grows.
Ask ye, wherefore the growing?
It is to reach to His height in tallness, to widen to His forehead in wisdom,
To beat with the untired strength of His great heart in loving.
So encompass ye your tribe with smiling goodness and service;
As this mother is about her babe,
As this man about this mother,
As the waters round this land, and the stars about these waters;
As K'antsamiq'ala Soe is about His world.

CHIEFTAIN

For me the night holds no lonely hours of longing.
I draw the dark about me as a blanket
And stretch into the pine's embrace for dreamless sleep:
Or, if I wake,
The parting boughs
Admit the wind—
His sheath full-thrust with the bright blade of song.
At his bridle-rein
Walk the stars,
His brothers in a fleet chaste manhood.
As a hunter and his friends harvest-laden
They enter my lodge;
The night is filled with news of the spaces,
Murmurings from infinite places, and melodies
Hushed, sweet, strange, exalting, wild,
Sung by the wind with drawn blade
Dancing upon my green swaying floors.
I am chief of a brave wide company;
My soul, strong and complete,
Is the comrade of Kunae-Kia, Man-Soul of the Vast.

THE CHANGE SONG

Death's first snows are drifting on my cheek,
Pale are my lips
As the kiss of the young Spring Moon;
I lie low and still.
Near me crouch my silent kinsmen,
They hold the breath and wait the hour of wailing;
They have wrapped the scarlet mourning blanket
Round the shoulders of the oldest man,
He has taken their sorrow.
He droops at my door
Like a bleeding hawk where the eagles have battled.
He is so old he feels not any grief,
His heart is cold,
In his ears no sound is,
And in his eyes no light.
Therefore have my kinsmen given him their griefs;
Because the dawn leaps clear into their eyes,
Because the sound of women's feet
Rustling on the cedar mats when the torch is blown
Calls sweetly to their ears,
And their hearts are beating for the hunt.
They may not bear the sorrow of my passing,
We have known strong joys together!

I take your loves, my kinsmen,
I leave you with no griefs!
Sing! my kinsmen, when you swing me
To the topmost branches of the cedar;
Sweet-smelling arms of cedar, reach for me,
Tenderly receive me,
Hold me in the last caress under open sky!

Sing! my kinsmen, when the oldest man
Takes his lone trail through the forest.
He will wear no mourning-blanket when he comes again
tomorrow!
He will say, "Rejoice!
I have borne your grief afar,
I have buried it deep,
The place is not known."
The wind of your singing shall rock me
In the arms of my mother, the cedar.
Yet there is a sweeter song, my kinsmen;
It is the Change-Song of Supreme One.
I hear it now,
He chants it to my heart;
Because pale death has crossed my threshold and has clasped
my hand.
"Fear not," sings Supreme One;
"I am making pure, making pure,

I destroy not life,
I am Life-Maker!"
The oldest man has entered the forest.
Ah! Ah! my kinsmen are wailing;
They saw me depart with Death
Into the White Change.
But I go on—and on!
And I sing the Change-Song of Supreme One:
"Ha-K'eohos la no-ya ai-a me la-la,
Q'oalahag i-he-e la-wo!"

THE CHIEF'S PRAYER AFTER THE SALMON CATCH

O Kia-Kunae, praise!
Thou hast opened thy hand among the stars,
And sprinkled the sea with food;
The catch is great; thy children will live.
See, on the roofs of the villages, the red meat drying;
Another year thou hast encompassed us with life.
Praise! Praise! Kunae!
O Father, we have waited with shut mouths;
With hearts silent, and hands quiet,
Waited the time of prayer,
Lest with fears we should beset thee,

And pray the unholy prayer of asking.
We waited silently; and thou gavest life.

Oh, praise! Praise! Praise!

Open the silent mouths, the shut hearts, my tribe:
Sing high the prayer of Thanksgiving,
The prayer He taught in the beginning to the Kwakiutl;
The good rejoicing prayer of thanks.
As the sea sings on the wet shore, when the ice thunders back,
And the blue water floats again, warm, shining, living,
So break thy ice-bound heart, and the cold lip's silence—
Praise Kunae for life, as wings up-flying, as eagles to the sun.
Praise! Praise! Praise!

THE WARRIOR LOOKS BACK

Ne-tah in-tah-hah
The days appointed us are finished.

The smoke of the Lodge thins
That once was a blue wind
Rolling above many tepees.
The warriors are no more; the hunters no more;

They are gone with the buffalo and the deer.
Like white clouds
Their ghosts ride upon the silver sky of evening
Before the dusk falls.

Our hearts are as sunken waters
And our eyes a mist;
Our strength has become a brooding and a dream.
Ghosts are we who once were passionate and strong;
Ghosts against silver,
That the dark shall cover.

Ne-tah in-tah-hah!
The days appointed us are finished.

SPRING TO THE EARTH WITCH

My eyes I will not cover!
I am Pai-iya—stepping free on the goat-hills behind thy village.
Blue shadows and white mists, like flowers,
Lie deep in thy green forests.
Night lingers in thy hair;
Pools of starred dusk are thine eyes.
Thy speech is gray fog, impenetrable,

Shrouding the port of the crimson lure.
(The ships of the trusting are broken.)
Oh flower-red is thy girdle at morning and evening!
If it were loosened there would be a race of men,
And thou the harbor of a thousand wondering ships.
I have lifted dawn before me as a shield,
Swi-ya Kwen-e-we-sals!

The Raven pecks beside thy door,
On thy roof the Thunder-Bird claps his wings,
Thy smile dartles across the skies.
Thy smile is death—
My heart is the riven sea beneath.
If thy scarlet girdle were unknotted would it stem the sea of my wound?
Nay! Call not me with the wind blowing through thy garments!
I have bound the mountains to my feet,
Swi-ya Kwen-e-we-sals!

Last night I saw winged stars in flight
Circling over thy dwelling.
They swung at rest on the points of the shore pine—
Torches red-spanning the bay.
My wolves, at my call,
In long gray troops fled up from the forest.

They sphered in guard about me—sleeping on my shield
poised on the four world-crags—
As darkened silver cloud-mists wind about the moon.
I have shepherded them into the canyon between us;
(But my eyes I will not cover!)
Wilt thou come darkling among my fanged flocks,
Swi-ya Kwen-e-we-sals?

What is this warmth stealing to my height,
Like footsteps of a strange desire?
Wave on wave of pink and gold breaks over the white;
The petals open, chirring,
As if they were feathers on the song-bird's swelling throat.
My wolves, with heads hanging and fangs covered, slowly
moving, moving,
Huddle in the valley, like sky-shadows before rain.
Whose steps flow and ripple over the dark moss
Parting the green walls of cedars,
Blossoming among my mating flocks?
Whence this unraveling of flame blown loose across the air?

My eyes I will not cover!
I have woven thongs of the mountain mists
And bound me to the morning star.
Between the cliffs of Night and Day thou emergest!
Thy sod-brown bosom, the mystical craving eyes above;
The yearning fragrance of thy closed hands,

The wild winds between thy feet
And the rivers under thy girdle!
I have cast down the great shield of the dawn—
Come, redden its rim with me,
Swi-ya Kwen-e-we-sals!

SONG OF THE MAIDEN WEAVING

O my mother, Cedar-Tree,
Bend low, sing to me, caress me!
I have taken thy long white fingers,
Thy fragrant fingers,
To weave a great basket
For my harvest of berries in the Ripe Days.
Winter will come with hunger; I shall not hunger—
Thy fingers have woven love and life in my basket,
So shall my harvest be great!
O Heaven-Chief, Supreme Praised One,
I am a basket Thou hast woven,
A great basket swelling to hold the harvest;
The harvest is love and life, and little running feet of children.
(For whom hast Thou gathered this store?
When will he come to eat of his harvest?)

NO ANSWER IS GIVEN

I am Ah-wo-'a-te, the Hunter.

I met a maiden in the shadow of the rocks.
Her eyes were strange and clear,
Her fair lips were shaped like the bow of dawning.
I asked her name,
Striking my spear in the deep earth for resting.
"I am K'antlak, a maiden, named for the morning.
On the mountain top I heard two eagles talking,
The word was 'Love.'
They cried it, beating their wings on each other
Until they bled; and she fell,
Yet falling, still weakly cried it
To him soaring; and died.
I came to a mossy low valley of flowers
There I saw Men'iak, the white grouse,
(White with chaste dreams, like the Spring Moon, fairer than flowers).
Through the forest a dark bird swooped with fierce eyes,
And Men'iak flew down to it.
Her white breast is red-dyed, she lies on the moss;
Yet faintly cries the same strange word.
Hunter, will you come to my little fire and tell me what Love is?"

I could not see the maiden's face clearly, for the dusk,
Where she sat by her small fire—only her eyes.
In the little flicker I saw her feet—they were bare—
Tireless, slim brown feet.
I saw how fair her lips were.
I drew nearer to cast my log on the fire. I said:
"Maiden, I am the Hunter.
When dusk ends the chase I leave the Mighty Killing.
Far or near, where gleams some little fire,
I grope through the forest with my heavy log
Till I find one by the fire, sitting alone without fuel.
I cast my log gladly into the fire—thus!
It grips, the flame mounts, the warmth embraces. . . .

Almost I can see your face, Woman;
The bow of your fair lips is hot with speeded arrows,
Your strange clear eyes have darkened.
Fear not—our fire will outlast the dark."

"Hunter, what of the cold on the bleak hillside
When the log burns gray and the fire is ashes?"
I replied: "I have never seen this:
When the fire burns low I am asleep."
She said: "What of me, if I sleep not, and see the ashes?"
I yawned: I said: "I know not.
I wake in the sun and go forth."

The bow of her lips was like the moon's cold circle.
She said, "Hunter, you have told me of Love!"
"It may be so," I answered. I wished to sleep.
She said, "Already it is ashes."
I looked and saw that her face was gray
As if the wind had blown the ashes over it.
I was angry. I said: "Better you had slept."
She said, "Yes . . . but I lie bleeding on the moss,
Crying this word."
I answered: "This is so; but wherefore?" and asked idly
"Wherefore remember him who brought to your lone little fire
The log that now is ashes?"
She shivered in the cold dawn.
I saw that her eyes were darker than shadows;
Her mouth was like my perfect bow
But I could fit no more arrows to it.

She said, "Hunter, see how gray are these rocks
Where we have sheltered our brief night."
I looked. They were ashen.
She said, "See how they come together here—and here—
As the knees—the breast—the great brow—the forgotten eyes—
Of a woman,
Sitting, waiting, stark and still,—

And always gray;
Though hunters camp each night between her knees,
And little fires are kindled and burned out in her hollows."
It was so; the mountain was a stone woman sitting.
K'antlak said, "She remembers him who turned her fire to
ashes.
She waits to know the meaning of her waiting—
Why the love that wounded her can never be cast out."

I asked idly, "Who will tell her?"
And laughed, for the sun was up. I reached for my arrows.
I drew my strong spear from the deep earth by her feet.
K'antlak looked up to the other gray face, and said:
"No Answer is Given."
Down to the cold white endless sea-shore
Slowly she went, with bent head.
A young deer cast its leaping shadow on the pool;
I ran upon the bright path, swaying my spear.

SHE WHO CANNOT GIVE

I am fire and a song:
Fire kindled by storm,
Song of the woman who is taken.

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When you asked, the song ceased;
The flame died when you asked.

CODE

Turn thy face again to the North,
O solitary spirit that was I.
When thy hands grow frail
And the bleak heart shows no verdure of hope,
Go aside from human paths; go alone:
Enter the deep hidden dark of the forest.
Wrap thy code about thee once more, as the dead chief's
blanket;
Stand—lean a very little if thou must—
Beside a high sinewed pine:
And there at last fall slowly, gently, calmly,
On the unmocking earth—
Like some down-drifting leaf;
Unseen, wholly insignificant,
Yet having the dignity of pure Nature in dissolution,
The majesty of Silence.

THE STRANGE WOMAN AT THE MOUNTAIN

I have sought for strength in men;
Eager to bow before it
The head and the thighs
That are too heavy with pride:
Eager to shatter there as crystal
The will that slowly darkens and turns to iron.
But only in my own soul have I found it—
The strength I have sought in men.

Mountain,
Are you, too,
Fire quenched in rock;
Will that ranged heaven for a god to break it,
Frozen into immobility?
Are you, too, loneliness—
Too far above earth,
And not near the stars?

Only in my own soul—

INCANTATION FOR HEALING

(The Old Beloved Speech is an Indian term meaning, "the whole truth and only the truth.")

Speak to me, oh speak to me,
In the Old Beloved Speech!
And my heart shall live again
That long time was sick from lies;
(That has bled and died for lies,
Lies more bright than Autumn rain!)
Let your truth be barren tree
Whipping under winter skies,
Neither shade nor shelter giving
When the ice-winds lash and screech;
Only speak, oh speak, to me
In the Old Beloved Speech!

Speak to me, oh speak to me,
In the Old Beloved Speech!
Though your truth fall cold as hail,
Winter your words, winter your face,
And your eyes—like wintry space
Loosing the ice-wind's bitter flail—
Freeze my sky and close my sea;
My dead heart shall bud with grace,

Out of dark and death come living
With the life your truth shall teach;
If you speak— Ah! speak to me
In the Old Beloved Speech!

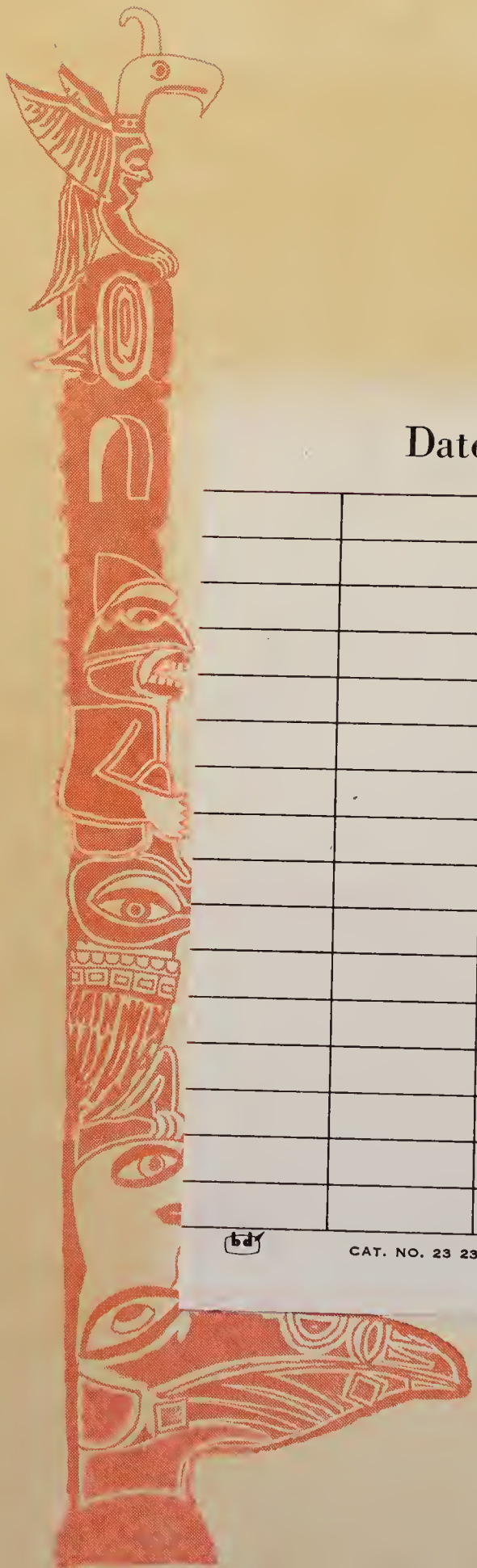
THE STRANGE WOMAN ASKS

What am I? A broken flute
Dropped back into a marsh of reeds,
That grow and blow and flower
Because no hand has plucked them
And too finely, cruelly, shaped them for song.
What am I?
Water lost within waters,
A shadow lost in the night's army of shadows,
A black feather fallen
From the night's pinions of blackness;
A star that died
When this world of men was born.
What am I? A wanderer
On a blank trail by the edge of life
Whom no signal-fire beckons;
A woman who passes with empty hands,

卐 卐 卐 卐 卐 卐 卐 卐 卐 卐 卐 卐 卐

Passes alone; yet singing, singing,
. . . That ever the day draws nearer when one shall come
To fill her empty hands—
Death shall come and fill them,
Fill them with their own dust.

THE END



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